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WHITE PAPER

#5. Great Speeches

The Power of Language

Version 2.1

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Purpose: Writing a speech is a literary art. But there's more: great speeches have a hidden code that follow the 4 Drives of Human Behavior. Language can be "tuned" into the deep psychological drives of human behavior. By tuning into the "drives" a speaker can communicate effectively to a very broad audience. This paper addresses the following issues:

- The 4 "Drives" of Human Behavior
- Analyzing Great Speeches for the 4 Drives
- Words to use to connect into the psyche

^a Portions of this paper were written with Paul R. Lawrence and published before his death (2011) in the European Business Review (May-June 2011). We were working on this before he passed away.

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Great Speeches & the Power of Language

Part 1. DRIVERS OF BEHAVIOR

By Lawrence & Lynch¹

To understand the language of a great speech, it's first necessary to grasp the fundamental roots of human nature and how our brains are wired from our evolution as a species.. Reaching back to what Darwin found in



his *Decent of Man (1872)*², and extensive research over the last hundred years into the neurological process of the human brain, we can understand how humans behave and what drives performance. Each individual on the planet is imbued with four innate “drives”³ (see Figure 1):

- ◆ **Drive to Acquire** – to compete for, secure, and own useful resources (food, shelter, etc.), exert control over one’s environment, including pleasure and, pushed to the limit, greed and domination.
- ◆ **Drive to Bond** – to cooperate with others, physically engage (sex, embracing), to form long-term mutually caring relationships, and, at its fullest, to love.
- ◆ **Drive to Create** – first to learn, to comprehend one’s environment, then to inquire beyond, improve, imagine and invent, and to find moral meaning and purpose.
- ◆ **Drive to Defend** – to protect from threats to one’s physical self, one’s loved ones, valued possessions and basic beliefs, and, pushed to the extreme, to attack.^b

Each individual has their own distinctive blend of these drives and typically manifests them in manner learned from their unique experiences in life. These drives must be reasonably satisfied and are independent of one another in the sense that fulfilling one does not contribute to the fulfilling of the others. This means that the drives are often in conflict, but, with conscious awareness of the need to satisfy these inherent drives, the effective leader can resolve these conflicts by selecting a course of action that best satisfies all four drives but emphasizes the higher-order drives that make us uniquely human.

However, the culture of the immediate organizational environment has a major effect on these drives, either by reinforcing or suppressing one drive over another. That’s why the same individual may behave quite differently in different organizations, or why changing leaders can produce radically different results within the same group of people.

^b dAcquire and dDefend are common to all mammals and reptiles, although more developed in humans, while dBond and dCreate are far more elevated and refined in homo sapiens than any other primate or mammal, making them almost uniquely human.

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Trust & Organizational Culture

An organizational culture based on control and fear will trigger and emphasize the **Acquire** and **Defend** drivers, resulting in an organization that has fiefdoms and power-struggles as territorial battles and rivalries emerge between business units, functions, or buyers and suppliers (and also producing very poor alliances and acquisitions). The fear-greed cycle, as typified by Wall Street, is the result of these two drivers becoming predominant. Typically acquisitions are failures because the **Create** and **Bond** drives are suppressed, making it extraordinarily difficult to integrate new innovation streams and creative teams into the acquiring company.

On the other hand, trust-building targets the **Bonding** and **Creative** drives (the underpinning of the term “collaborative innovation”) that are so essential to a modern corporation. Trust unleashes human energy, enabling the **Creative** learning drives of individuals to align and **Bond**. Thus teams and alliances are able to produce extraordinary results far beyond what can be achieved when distrust is activated by the **Acquire** and **Defend** drives.

The Leadership Compass acts as a navigational instrument for leaders to determine a course to achieve strategic objectives. In a fast moving, rapidly changing world, where flexibility and adaptability are strategically essential to success, setting a course that stimulates both the drives to **Bond** and **Create** supports collaborative innovation, and thus is far superior to one that activates the less competitively attractive **Acquire** and **Defend** drives.

Just as individuals manifest their unique drivers, so do organizations; we often refer to this as “culture:” a set of patterns of behavior and organizational processes that are measured and rewarded, giving each organization a unique fingerprint. A leader must be especially cognizant of his or her molding of these drivers because of the massive impact on outcomes.

For example, the “dominate” and “control” (**Acquire** & **Defend**) nature of General Motors toward its suppliers during the last two decades created a severe competitive disadvantage compared to Toyota’s use of a far more advantageous collaborative innovation (**Bond** & **Create**). This is evident in the 2004 PPI report that stated that because the trust level with GM was so low that supplier innovation flow was being directed to Toyota and Honda, and away from GM.

Creating a Culture of Trust – the Essence of Collaborative Leadership

There’s no doubt that culture has a very profound effect on molding people’s beliefs and behaviors. Culture is all-pervasive, and also elusive. Any standard definition of culture will include norms, values, standards, rewards, punishments, procedures, ad nauseam. And that’s the problem. Tell any leader that the problem is in the culture, and the elusive entanglement of psycho-sociological factors will send most heads spinning rapidly to confusion, desperation, and quickly into some other quick fix that is not nearly as cumbersome and confounding as culture.

However, our research and analysis shows that if a leader focuses intensely on one key aspect of culture: *trust*, and aligns metrics, standards, and rewards to support a coherent system of trust, most of the other elements of culture will quickly fall into line.

Causes of Trust and Traps of Distrust

What causes distrust? In a word: *fear*; in particular, *fear of being taken advantage of* or *fear of being put in a disadvantageous position*, or *fear of being hurt financially, emotionally or physically* or *fearful insecurity*, or *fear of loss*.

Fear, focused outward on a common threat, may destroy the enemy, but, focused inward, will certainly destroy trust and teamwork from within. Fear Paralyzes Some, Angers Many, and Foments Hate & Revenge with Certainty

To have trust, at a minimum, one must sense that there is a level of safety in any relationship -- that one will not be harmed or worse off for having this interaction. Building trust is possible only when one tempers one’s drive for personal acquisition (d**Acquire** = self interest) and reduces aggressiveness (d**Defend**) to enable greater empathy (d**Bond**) thus embracing mutual interest and alignment with the interests of others. Trust is the accelerated when the joint learning capacities (d**Create**) of the parties are engaged as fully as possible.

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Part 2: Imagery of the Four Drives

While manipulative leaders may follow Machiavelli's precept that it's alright to say one thing and do another, truly great leaders are deeply conscious of how their words impact the sensibilities of those who hear their message. Throughout history great leaders have learned how the power of the spoken word.⁴

A great speech (or any complete form of communications for that matter, including great written declarations, position statements, covenants, or charters), if designed to build trust, will invariably contain aligned imagery displaying at least one point from each of the four drives:

Table 1: Imagery according to the Four Drives

dAcquire	dBond	dCreate	dDefend
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitiveness • Goal Achievement • Pleasure for me • Ownership • Control & Territory • Feeling of Power • Money & Goods • Self Interest • Gain and Win • Attaining Status or Recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Together, • Work Ethic • Good for All • Do the Right Thing • Care about Others • Team, Unite, Form Alliances • Unite to Survive & Thrive • Use our Collective Brain Power • Support each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use knowledge and Imagination • Outthink/Outsmart the competition • Ask Ourselves Important Questions • Achieve Great Things • Find Meaning & Purpose • Learn from our Experiences • Innovate & Change • Discovery & Inquiry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survival/Adversity • Prevent Fear from Destroying Us • Attack & Win • Beat Competitors • Close Ranks • Protect what we have • Avoid Risks & Traps • Never Give Up • Prevent losing what we have gained

A great leader inspires and touches people's minds in a rich and full manner, not having to impose positional authority to have a powerful influence. By examining great speeches, it becomes obvious that charismatic leaders implicitly know how to fully engage all four drives in their imagery. (see Table 1: **Imagery according to the Four Drives**) We're going to illustrate the integration of the Four Drive Model into leader's messages by taking thematic excerpts from two highly inspiring speeches, one from a great warrior and one from a great peacemaker.^c

^c While only two speeches are analyzed here, the reader might want to look up other memorable speeches, such as John Kennedy's "Ask not what you can do for your country" or Ronald Reagan's "Tear Down This Wall!" or Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" or Franklin Roosevelt's "Nothing to Fear but Fear Itself" --1933 First Inaugural. All these speeches follow the Four Drive imagery.

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Part 3: Great Speeches Analyzed

General Patton

The first speech is General Patton's speech⁵ delivered as thousands of his men were preparing to risk their lives launching the Normandy Invasion, June 1944 (this speech was featured at the beginning of the movie PATTON starring George C. Scott):



You are here today for three reasons. (dCreate)

First, because you are here to defend your homes and your loved ones. (dDefend)

Second, you are here for your own self respect (dAcquire)

Third, you are here because you are real men and all real Americans love the sting and clash of battle. (dAcquire)

Americans love a winner. Americans will not tolerate a loser. Americans despise cowards. Americans play to win all of the time. (dAcquire + dBond +dDefend)

Every man is scared in his first battle. If he says he's not, he's a liar. Some men are cowards but they fight the same as the brave men or they get the hell slammed out of them watching men fight who are just as scared as they are. The real hero is the man who fights even though he is scared. (dAcquire +dDefend)

But a real man will never let his fear of death overpower his honor, his sense of duty to his country.(dBond)

All through your Army careers, you men have bitched about drilling. That, like everything else in this Army, has a definite purpose. That purpose is Alertness. A man must be alert at all times if he expects to stay alive. (dCreate)

An army is a team. It lives, sleeps, eats, and fights as a team. This individual heroic stuff is pure horse manure! You are part of a team. Without team effort the fight will be lost. All of the links in the chain pull together and the chain becomes unbreakable. (dBond)

Every man does his job. Every man serves the whole. Every department, every unit, is important in the vast scheme of this war. (dBond +dCreate)

My men don't surrender! I don't want to hear of any soldier under my command being captured unless he has been hit. Even if you are hit, you can still fight back. (dDefend)

All of the real heroes are not storybook combat fighters, either. Every single man in this Army plays a vital role. Don't ever let up. Don't ever think that your job is unimportant. Every man has a job to do and he must do it. Every man is a vital link in the great chain. (dBond +dCreate)

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*What if every truck driver suddenly decided that he didn't like the whine of those shells overhead, turned yellow, and jumped headlong into a ditch? The coward could say, "Hell, they won't miss me, just one man in thousands." But, what if every man thought that way? Where in the hell would we be now? What would our country, our loved ones, our homes, even the world, be like? No, damn it, Americans don't think like that. Each man must not think only of himself, but also of his buddy fighting beside him. **(dBond)***

*When a man is lying in a shell hole, if he just stays there all day, [he'll get killed] eventually. The hell with that idea... My men don't dig foxholes..... Foxholes only slow up an offensive. Keep moving. And don't give the enemy time to dig one either. I don't want to get any messages saying, "I am holding my position." We are not holding a damned thing. We are advancing constantly....Our basic plan of operation is to advance and to keep on advancing regardless of whether we have to go over, under, or through the enemy. **(dAcquire)***

*There will be complaints that we are pushing our people too hard. I don't give a damn about such complaints. I believe in the old and sound rule that an ounce of sweat will save a gallon of blood. The harder we push, the fewer casualties. I want you all to remember that. **(dAcquire +dDefend)***

General Patton was one very tough, hard-as-nails leader, and highly trusted in battle by his army. His speech is clear evidence why men were willing to give their lives to follow him in battle.

Martin Luther King

Next let's look at a totally opposite situation, Martin Luther King, a peacemaker seeking freedom for all people of color delivering his highly inspirational "I have a Dream!" speech: (excerpts from speech 28 August 1963, at the Lincoln Memorial, Washington D.C)



*Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of their captivity. **(dAcquire +dBond +dCreate)***

*But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free ... still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination ...still living on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity ... still languishing in the corners of American society ... an exile in his own land. **(dAcquire +dBond)***

*When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the "unalienable Rights" of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." **(dAcquire +dBond +dCreate)***

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The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges. (dBond +dCreate +dDefend)

In the process of gaining our rightful place, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again, we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. (dAcquire +dBond +dCreate +dDefend)

The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny. (dAcquire +dBond +dCreate +dDefend)

Some of you have come from areas where your quest -- quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive. Go back ... knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. (dAcquire +dBond +dCreate +dDefend)

Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.... even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dreamdeeply rooted in the American dream. (dAcquire +dCreate +dDefend)

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal." I have a dream that one day..... the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today! (dAcquire +dBond +dCreate +dDefend)

It's *not* a matter of going through the four-drive checklist and peppering a speech with all the right clichés and buzz words. The great leader builds trust by both the language she chooses as well as by the belief systems that are central to her thoughts and vision for the future, which then evolve into language that elevates, inspires, bonds, and builds a trusted pathway to destiny.

A leader whose internal drivers are in conflict will build an organizational culture and communicate emotions and thoughts that, too, are in conflict. Dysfunctional behavior will soon be evident throughout the organization.⁶

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Leaders who truly understand the value of trust and have internally integrated their four drives and the three influencers confidently know that the words that she expresses outwardly will be will be an accurate expression of the coherence our inner drivers and influencers.

Actions Speak Louder than Words

A leader cannot and should not try to get inside the head of every person they wish to build trust with. It's too complicated, as any psychologist knows. This is where and why actions are so important.

Action is an essential driving home any written or verbal communications. Our actions, in the final analysis, are the ultimate determinate of whether others trust us. We all painfully learn that words can be mere shallow illusions that the dishonorable use for their selfish ends.

Lest one think that the resolution of such conflicts is a difficult or convoluted unwinding of the proverbial Gordian Knot, there is a quick way to cut through all this, a "back door" so to speak, to correct the dissonance of misalignment. That "back door" is through action itself. Here's how that works.

The Power of Action Shifts Brain Functioning

Because the brain is such an intricate mechanism filled with often competing or even contradictory drives, the brain will act on initial emotional impulses unless carefully disciplined. The brain responds incredibly fast to outside stimulus – particularly verbal or visual inputs – within a quarter second. If words are not aligned with actions, our brain's pattern recognition and prediction circuitry becomes confused, disoriented, or conflicted. It may alert us to danger, signaling "take defensive action."

When thoughts and actions are not aligned, we cause the brain to live in two worlds, which becomes a continual source of internal agitation. Thoughts misaligned with actions manifest as, "do as I say, not as I do." By sending mixed signals into interpersonal relationships, the other person's mind interprets the dichotomy as duplicitous, or insincere, or untrustworthy, because ambiguity or uncertainty is a stress generator, which begins to trigger reptilian fear.

Sports trainers have known for a long time that if you train the body to behave in a certain way, the brain will cut a pathway to enable that action to become natural. By repeatedly shooting a basket, throwing a ball, enduring through pain, or obeying without complaint can be trained into the mind. Then the mind will conform to the new behavior. Perhaps you've heard the expression "Fake it 'til you make it."

Effective leaders are adept at aligning action with thought and emotions. By acting in a trusting, prudent manner, the mind will also recognize the difference – or "dissonance"⁷ – between emotions and thinking, and attempt to reconcile the misalignment.

This story helps illustrate. In 1993, New York City was adrift in a wave of crime and a sea of fear. Newly appointed Police Commissioner William Bratton faced an enormous challenge.

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The city was a mess. People were afraid of being mugged, they were afraid of having their cars stolen, they were afraid of the everyday assault on common decency and good conduct that had become the standard of New York behavior.

Surveys showed that more than half the people who had recently left the city did so to improve the quality of their lives. And the chief among the reasons they couldn't do that in the city was crime.

New Yorkers wanted a way out of the danger and lawlessness they saw around them. They couldn't walk from their apartments to the subway without getting aggressively panhandled or threatened, or worse.

New York City felt it was under siege, and there was the widespread sense that no one was doing anything about it.... There was a sense of doom on the streets.

Crime, and as important, attitudes about crime, could be turned around.... I believed that the police could, in fact, be counted on to have a significant effect on crime.

The cops on the beat wanted to do their jobs, but the brass didn't trust them to do it. With effective leadership and management we could control behavior in the street, and by controlling behavior we could change behavior. If we could change behavior we could control crime.⁸

Within two years, crime was being run out of town. Changes in behavior change perceptions, emotions and attitudes, which also change results. Changing the actual behaviors of people does more to shift trust positively than to talk abstractly or symbolically about it. A well-grounded behavioral approach⁹ -- an "Enlightened Realism" -- can bridge the seemingly intractable paradoxes and contradictions.

Messaging via Mind MAAPS

The brain insists that its pattern recognition and prediction processes function effectively. The leader must imprint messages clearly, and has a number of tools to ensure clarity and alignment in each of the four dimensions.

Great leaders link their messages in several frames of reference, including Metrics, Architecture, Actions, Pictures, and Stories (MAAPS -- not necessarily in this order):

Metrics – if you can't measure it, you can't manage it.

Money is the normal way of measuring business. But it is not the only nor always the best way. The best organizations understand the metrics of value as well as money. Those who fail to understand value default to price and cost. However, if business doesn't translate other metrics into money, it won't survive for long.

Performance metrics relate the key factors for success. These are leading achievement indicators that cascade their impact down to the bottom line. Sports coaches use this at every step of team-building to create a set of standards of performance excellence to gauge progress.

Standards of Excellence: what is considered the "best," most ethical, classiest, or worthy of merit.

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Architecture – the framework of any structure or system

Direction, Priorities & Policies – mission, vision, values, aligning with corporate realities.

Overarching Principles – fundamental laws, governing rules, or core principles of the system

Power & Organization Structure – power in the organizational structure lies where it belongs to achieve mission, purpose, and gain competitive advantage. Are decisions made for the good of the whole?

System Interfaces – most organizational breakdowns happen at the interface of different functions. Does human energy flows in positive directions? Do functional units inter-act synergistically? Is trust and teamwork the highest standard of interaction? Does information flow accurately to the places that need it?

Control Systems: The processes in place to monitor what is going on, limit and govern too much or too little, feedback loops that self adjust, policies and procedures to produce high performance while limiting dangerous conditions.

Actions – speak louder than words

Recruiting, Hiring, Training, Performance Review, & Promotion: these communicate what is rewarded or punished and can be some of the most important actions a leader can take to build a culture that is high performance, high trust, and high teamwork.

Relationships, Rituals & Routines: interactions between people, teams, cross-functional units, and outsiders (aliens or alliances)

Content & Direction of Conversations: what is talked about, what's not said, or couched in denial or distortion, what questions are asked, how does information move up, down, across.

Programs: what gets attention, top people, & budget

Core Messages: what the top executives speak (classify messages according to Acquire, Bond, Create, Defend are reinforced)

Pictures – speaks a thousand words

Visual Communications: people more likely remember what they see than what they hear.

Graphs: what is the content of graphs?

Organization Charts: what does it say about how people are supposed to think about networks? hierarchies? alliance partners? stakeholders? authority? decision-making?

Presentations: how do people communicate to others in presentations?

Symbols: what icons signify meaning to others, including brand, awards, images, levels of excellence

Stories – the emotional and historical connections to reality

Legends: the history and myths of the organization and its leaders, particularly how they want to be remembered and memorialized, especially under conditions of stress, difficulty, or turmoil.

Illustrations: vignettes, books, allegories, movies, magazine articles, media depictions that communicate the emotions, rationale, values, and response mechanisms of the organization and its leaders.

These the MAAPS of the organization will communicate how people think, what they believe, what they consider important, and the key measures of their culture. The leader need not use every dimension of the MAAPS – but should be aware when one is missing, misaligned, unbalanced, muddled, or contradictory.

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ENDNOTES

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- ¹ Part 1 – Drivers of Human Behavior: from Lawrence, Paul R. and Lynch, Robert Porter; Leadership and the Structure of Trust; European Business review, May-June 2011
- ² Erroneously, Herbert Spencer's 1864 comment about "survival of the fittest" led to confusion over Darwin's core thesis (later elaborated upon in *The Descent of Man*), which focused primarily on cooperation, adaptation to change, as well as man's capacity to make moral decisions.
- ³ This approach to leadership is explained in *Driven, How Human Nature Shapes Our Choices* (Lawrence & Nohria, HBS, 2001) and Paul Lawrence's forthcoming book *Driven to Lead*.
- ⁴ Pericles' Oration to the Dead Warriors of Athens in the 5th century BC is considered the first of the great speeches. Abraham Lincoln was probably familiar with this speech, which was required reading for school boys of his era, and the Gettysburg address was likely modeled on Pericles.
- ⁵ Excerpted from the full version of the original speech. Expletives deleted
- ⁶ A great leader will use the gifts of the prefrontal "executive decision-making center" already provided within the brain to resolve these conflicts.
- ⁷ See Festinger, Leon; *Cognitive Dissonance*
- ⁸ Bratton, William, Turnaround – How America's Top Cop Reversed the Crime Epidemic; Random House, 1998, pp ix-xi
- ⁹ A "behavioral approach" refers to the nature of human behavior, and should not be confused with "behaviorist psychology."